

better in ways that we really have not at the beginning of recent sessions.

Mr. Speaker, let me yield to my colleague from New York, Mr. HOUGHTON.

Mr. HOUGHTON. Mr. Speaker, with your concurrence, I would like to follow up and really say how much I admire the gentleman from Ohio. He and I worked closely together. These are not just words, he really believes this, and I think we all do, too. Mrs. CLAYTON is sitting here as part of our group and has been an enormous contributor.

Mr. Speaker, we really are in trouble here. This is not just a debating society. We are reflecting the feelings of the people in this country, and when you are in trouble, you talk. People say we can talk on the House floor. Why go away? Why have a bipartisan retreat?

Well, you really cannot do that. What we are trying to do is bring not only individuals together, but their families and children together. So this is the totality of what we are striving for.

To follow up on what you have said, Mr. SAWYER, this is nothing new. I have gone to the Congressional Research Service and tried to get a little research in terms of some of the things George Washington said and his emphasis on comity or what Thomas Jefferson said.

I have something that is interesting here. This is written by a Member of Congress and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, and, if I can just quote it, it says, "It is my firm belief that the majority of members on both sides of the aisle would like to reduce the level of tension in partisan clashes and get on with the business of the country, and, therefore, we ought to cool off."

This was written in 1984. It always crops up this way. Periodically, we have got to lance the boil and get at it. I applaud what you are doing and your leadership here.

Mr. SAWYER. Yours as well.

Let me add, while we have time, that the planning for this and its execution will involve no taxpayer money. We have had initial conversations with a few memorial trusts who have expressed a serious interest. While we cannot commit this for them ahead of time, we have every confidence that they are eager to be helpful with this.

In the end, it is not a solution. It is just a recognition that when, after divisive campaigns, when we come together, there ought to be a way to get to know one another in terms other than those in which we have been engaged in recent conflict.

In past Congresses, there have been opportunities for this. In more recent Congresses, those opportunities have been more limited. We feel that this effort to do this will help to address not only this incoming class, but those in more recent classes who have really not had the opportunity to get to know one another in the way that we did when we first came to this Chamber.

Mr. HOUGHTON. Periodically, we sort of get off base here. Seriously, this is an opportunity to do something for the country, not just for this Chamber.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

SEQUENCE OF SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the place of the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] and mine in the special order time be substituted and reversed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

A NEW CRISIS IN DRUG USE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, there are some very alarming new figures out from the Drug Enforcement Administration that I am aware of that we announced today from my office as chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime. The eastern Caribbean is now the transit area for more than 40 percent of all the cocaine coming into the United States mainland, more than 40 percent.

Previously, the figures were the Southwest border was the primary problem we had, with more than 70 percent, in the estimates of DEA, of the cocaine trafficking into our country. Today, we know that that shift is on that a lot of us have been fearing as we have watched the interdiction assets, the ships and the planes and the personnel and the radar necessary to track and interdict drugs in the eastern Caribbean, be reduced so dramatically over the last 3 years.

It is a very serious crisis for my State of Florida as a result of that. Our young people, 12 to 17 years of age, have a dramatic increase in drug usage. Florida is above the national average, and we all know there has been more than a 100-percent increase in drug usage generally by young people in that age group over the last 3 years, over 166-percent increase in cocaine use among that age group in one year alone, the last year measured by the United States Government. My State of Florida has even more than that.

As alarming as that is, heroin use is up. In Orlando, FL, we had more overdose deaths of teenagers from heroin in Orlando just last year than the city of Los Angeles, which is 5 times our size. And the reason for that is pretty darn simple.

When you look at the interdiction and the drug flow problem, you see

that 62 percent of all heroin now is coming in from Colombia, not the Far East, and 99 percent of that is coming in through the eastern Caribbean or through direct flights into Miami or New York City. This problem is very simple right now. The problem is very serious. We have a crisis in Florida. We have a crisis in the Nation.

Look at the figures on the eastern Caribbean, represented here historically, in terms of trying to stop this drug flow. We can see in 1993, the Coast Guard, the Navy, the Air Force, and Customs had shipping days, the way they measure how much time they spend looking for drugs, of 371 ship-days for every single month of the year in 1993.

But by 1996, because the funding had been cut and the requests by this administration and the drug policy office of the czar, they had cut the shipping days to 195 from 371. Now, current as of August of this year, we are down from 371 days of steaming out there, looking for drugs in the eastern Caribbean around Puerto Rico, where most of this comes from, to 195.

Flight hours, the number of planes looking with night vision and radar scopes and so forth, down from 3,175 flight hours per month in 1993, to this year in August, 1,149. One-third the number of hours are being spent in the air looking for drugs in the eastern Caribbean around Puerto Rico, where most of this comes in.

And the number of radar stations, in 1994, there were 17 of them in the eastern Caribbean. Now there are only 89 looking for drugs. Is it any wonder we have this crisis? There is no wonder in my mind. This administration has not done the job that it should have.

So the Florida Republicans, and some of the departments, joined with a separate letter, have written to the President about this, expressing our alarm, telling him about our concerns, about the crisis facing Florida, and asking him to do something about this, asking him to do something now, because the quantity is up, the price is down, and more kids are becoming users, Mr. President.

In our letter we call upon you to take immediate action to plug the drug pipeline in the eastern Caribbean. We ask at the very least that the number of interdiction ship days and flight hours in the eastern Caribbean by Coast Guard, Customs and Department of Defense be restored to 1993 levels. Frankly, we say, we believe that everything it takes to seal off Puerto Rico from drug trafficking should be done immediately, because almost all the cocaine in the eastern Caribbean is coming into Puerto Rico and then coming into the mainland from Puerto Rico because not enough is being done to stop it.

As you know, Puerto Rico is part of the United States, and the trip from Puerto Rico to Florida or New York is the same as going from Alabama to Illinois. We would not be degrading our